



[Donate Now](#)
[Latest News](#)

News & Events > News Archive

Preparing for Safe Winter Travel

12/18/2001 -- Rochester, NY, December 17, 2001...With the holiday season in full gear, it is important to remember that winter weather is not far behind. Last year's severe ice storm that ripped through Arkansas, Texas, Oklahoma and Louisiana is a devastating reminder of the disastrous potential snowstorms carry. Winter watches have already gone into effect in some areas of the United States, including parts of Nevada, Washington and Hawaii.

The American Red Cross, the National Weather Service, the [Federal Emergency Management Agency](#) and the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#) (NOAA) urge people every year about the deceptive dangers associated with winter storms.

The Red Cross classifies winter storms as "deceptive killers" because most winter-related deaths are indirectly related to storms. Flash floods, avalanches and car accidents are all potential killers.

According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, about 70 percent of automobile accidents resulting in death are ice-or-snow related. Another 25 percent of winter deaths can be attributed to people being caught out in a storm.

The National Weather Service reports that many people die each year when they attempt to leave their vehicle during a storm to walk to safety. Instead, stranded drivers should stay with the car, tie a piece of cloth to the car's antenna, and keep the car running while using the heater 10 minutes out of each hour. People should remember to keep their interior lights on while the engine is running, and to avoid hypothermia by constantly moving their arms and legs.

Hypothermia is a serious condition that predominantly affects males and people over 60. Warning signs for detecting severely low body temperature are memory loss, disorientation, incoherence, slurred speech, drowsiness, exhaustion, and uncontrollable shivering. People generally suffer from hypothermia after being over-exposed to extremely cold weather, dangerous wind chills, ice and snowstorms, freezing rain or sleet — another reason why stranded passengers should remain in their vehicles until help arrives.

"The problem with winter storms is that they can sneak up on you with little or no warning," said Becky McCorry, Greater Rochester Chapter director of emergency services.

Winter Travel Survival Kit

- Battery-powered radio and extra batteries
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Blankets or sleeping bags
- Booster cables



[Email Sign Up](#)
[Help Now](#)
[Health & Safety Training](#)



More In
News & Events:
[News Archive](#)
[Healing America](#)
[Special Events](#)
[Fleet Casting For Caring](#)
[Red Cross Month](#)

- Fire extinguisher (5 lb., A-B-C type)
- First aid kit and manual
- Bottled water and non-perishable high-energy foods, such as granola bars, raisins and peanut butter.
- Compass and road maps
- Shovel
- Tire repair kit and pump
- Flares
- Extra clothing to keep dry
- Sack of sand or cat litter (for tire traction)
- Tow rope
- Knife

"Our biggest recommendation is that people should listen to local weather forecasts and The Weather Channel, and plan to stay home when the weather is going to get bad," McCorry said. But if travel is necessary, it's best to inform someone of the travel route, destination and expected arrival time. "Having a disaster supplies kit in the car, including a flashlight with fresh batteries, is essential," McCorry said. Travelers should remember to keep their gas tanks near full to avoid ice in the tank and fuel lines.

Lucy Everett, disaster preparedness coordinator for the American Red Cross Greater Rochester Chapter, explains that being prepared is paramount for survival. Everett's Red Cross is part of a "Storm Ready Community" that joins the county, city and local weather services in promoting weather safety and awareness virtually year-round.

"If you are prepared for a disaster, it does not matter what type of disaster it is, you are less likely to panic and stress out. The better prepared you are, the better off you and your family will be. Practice the disaster plan and involve every member of your family."

Find detailed reports on the weather in your area at www.weather.com or find details on winter storms at www.noaa.gov or www.fema.gov.

Related Sites:

- [Winter Storm Preparedness](#)
- [Health & Safety December Tips](#)
- [Winter Storms, the Deceptive Killers](#)

Learn more by visiting our "[Emergency Preparedness Resources](#)" page.

[< Back to News Page](#)

